
Security Assistance in Kazakhstan: Building a Partnership for the Future

By

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Introduction

My first introduction to security assistance in Kazakhstan was December 2000. I had been promoted out of my position as the Central Asia analyst in JCS/J2 and had taken up temporary work in Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD) on Kazakhstan issues. After two years of observing and writing about the military and security situation in Central Asia, I was plunged headlong into the much more challenging world of security assistance. With years of preparation as a Foreign Area Officer, and a lot of on the ground experience in the region, I anticipated that being the first permanent security assistance officer (SAO) in Kazakhstan would be a challenge. As I took up my desk in OSD, the Ministry of Defense (MoD) had just requested to use all available foreign military financing (FMF) for construction of a military base, something unprecedented in the former Soviet Union. Today as I am writing this, the construction project has been delayed by nine months, the first High Mobility Multipurpose Wheeled Vehicle (HMMWV) for the Ministry of Defense was somehow shipped to Moscow, the first border forces candidates for the International Maritime Officers Course can not speak English, and the first English instructor from the Aviation Academy to be scheduled for Defense Language Institute (DLI) is hesitant to leave his homeland. Little did I know how difficult the challenge would be.



Lieutenant Colonel Lahue (right) congratulates Lieutenant Colonel Mukhamedov, Chief, International Cooperation Center on the arrival of Kazakhstan's first U.S. Army High Mobility Multipurpose Wheeled Vehicle in January 2002. The High Mobility Multipurpose Wheeled Vehicle in Kazakshtan courtesy of AM General.

What Kazakhstan Means to the United States

Before the United States intervention in Afghanistan, outside the oil industry or the small circle of academic and government specialists on the region, few in the United States knew where Central Asia was or had ever heard the name Kazakhstan. Even today, with Kazakhstan as a quiet sideshow to the events in Afghanistan, it is a relatively small group who understand Kazakhstan's potential to shift the balance of power in world oil markets and lessen the strategic importance of the Middle East. With the addition of the recently confirmed reserves of the Kashagan field in the North Caspian, within twenty years Kazakhstan could potentially become the largest oil-producing nation outside the Middle East.



The Tengiz field is one of the largest oil fields in the world and is the site of one of the single largest U.S. commercial investments in the Former Soviet Union.

The development of oil and gas deposits in the Caspian region, particularly oil rich Western Kazakhstan, and the infrastructure to transport it to market, has been the focus for U.S. policy in Central Asia for over a decade. U.S. oil companies have invested billions of dollars to develop oil fields in Western Kazakhstan and are likely to invest billions more. The challenge is to get this oil efficiently to market. To solve this problem, the U.S. has officially supported the construction of a major oil pipeline from Baku, Azerbaijan to Cehan, Turkey to carry Caspian crude through the Caucasus region, providing Caspian countries with an alternative to the pipelines in Russia and Iran. As Caspian oil production grows and begins to impact the world market, the stability of the Caspian and Caucasus regions will figure increasingly in U.S. and European security strategy. Also, Kazakhstan's growing defense needs and new wealth will increase its potential to become an important defense partner and market for U.S. and European defense equipment. Kazakhstan has little defense related infrastructure in the Caspian region, but is planning major new investments, including the development of a small naval force.

Another major focus for U.S. policy in Kazakhstan is nonproliferation of weapons of mass destruction. Kazakhstan possesses a significant number of industrial and defense related facilities that possess or produce materials necessary for the production of weapons of mass destruction. The U.S. has provided millions of dollars under programs such as Cooperative Threat Reduction and Export Control and Border Security to aid Kazakhstan in enhancing its controls over these

materials and improved export controls on the borders. Kazakhstan's close proximity to the Middle East and the turbulent Caucasus region make strict control over these materials imperative. Kazakhstan's long borders and fledgling border control infrastructure make it a prime candidate for continued U.S. security support.

The Soviet Legacy

When Kazakhstan declared independence in December 1991 it did not possess an army and so was forced to form an organization from disparate parts of what remained from the Soviet military. Military infrastructure and equipment designed to meet Soviet defense concerns was totally inappropriate for newly independent Kazakhstan. Kazakhstan inherited large amounts of military hardware, ammunition, and a significant weapons industry but few coherent staff organizations to manage it since much had been run from Moscow or the headquarters of the Turkestan Military District in Uzbekistan. There was also little in the way of a military training or education system.



Kazakhstan possesses a large arena of unneeded and obsolete weapons from the Soviet Union.

Significant components of the Soviet nuclear weapons industry and naval weapons industry were located in Kazakhstan but most of this fell into disrepair with the economic collapse that followed independence. Much of the military's technical expertise and experienced staff were ethnic Russians who left Kazakhstan after independence. This left Kazakhstan with numerous military and industrial facilities that either possess or produce materials or components for weapons, but a lack of sufficient personnel to operate and maintain it all.

Kazakhstan's location and vast open spaces made it ideal for development, testing, and stationing of strategic aviation and rocket forces, something too complex, expensive, and unnecessary for the new nation. Just after independence, Kazakhstan made a deal allowing Russia to retain the strategic bombers, missile systems, and nuclear weapons in exchange for tactical aviation and other support. Russia also retained the right to use the Baikonur space launch facilities and other military facilities, such as test ranges, in exchange for annual payments. Much of the payment is provided in military education, equipment, and services. Over 1000 Kazakhstani officers study in Russia annually. Over the years, Russia has provided tactical fighters, anti-aircraft systems, and in January of this year, new combat helicopters. This naturally means that Kazakhstan and Russia maintain a close defense relationship, making U.S. Security Assistance Office activities controversial in some parts of the Kazakh and Russian officialdom.

With independence, Kazakhstan suddenly had a huge country with long borders, including a maritime border on the Caspian Sea, but a population of less than seventeen million from which to form a new security infrastructure. While Kazakhstan was part of the former Soviet Union, the

only external border was with China, so all defense related infrastructure was oriented east. The most significant ground forces in Central Asia were located to the south, in Uzbekistan, bordering Afghanistan. Kazakhstan did not inherit a ground capability sufficient for its new defense needs. Kazakhstan did possess a significant number of border forces oriented on the Chinese border; however, these were subordinated to the KGB, and now its successor the Committee for National Security (KNB), which is primarily an intelligence organization.

Kazakhstan inherited little from the Soviet Union in the way of infrastructure or organizations to support maritime operations on the Caspian Sea. Primary ports, shipbuilding and ship maintenance facilities were located in Russia and Azerbaijan. The most economically significant maritime activities in Western Kazakhstan were on the Ural River, also a significant source of extremely valuable caviar. The city of Atyrau, located about 45 km from the Caspian, had a busy river port, now much less used. Atyrau is now experiencing explosive economic growth due to the oil industry. Significant defense industrial facilities, including naval weapons production, were located further north along the river. Since all commercial activities were government run, the economic and social collapse after the fall of the Soviet Union left boat-owning organizations, as well as government maritime management organizations, without funding for operations or maintenance. Most of these organizations either partly or completely collapsed; the employees left and usable assets were stripped. Dozens of partially sunken boats and the remnants of long unused docks clutter the riverbanks.

Soviet Naval forces on the Caspian were located mainly in Russia and Azerbaijan. Kazakhstan inherited some maritime law enforcement organizations associated primarily with fisheries and traditional police activities that suffered much the same fate as the others. The current organizations responsible for maritime security and law enforcement include the border forces, Ministry of Defense, Ministry of Interior, police, customs, and Ministry of Environment. All of those are in varying degrees equally handicapped. They face a shortage of experienced and trained personnel, a lack of equipment, little to no operational infrastructure, and a huge economically booming maritime region to manage.

Another significant challenge is the lack of a legal structure for managing maritime activities. Since the Soviet Union had no private commerce, and there was no international trade on the Caspian as there is now, Kazakhstan has had to struggle with the task of forming a maritime law system. With very few people with any maritime legal expertise, writing and enforcing maritime law to manage Kazakhstan's Caspian territory is no simple matter. This is significant when considering the complex procedures that must be maintained to prevent narcotics smuggling, poaching, and possible attempts to smuggle materials necessary to produce weapons of mass destruction. The challenge is compounded by the fact that the countries bordering the Caspian, (Russia, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Azerbaijan, and Iran) have not agreed on legal delimitation of the surface or subsurface borders.

Perhaps the most difficult aspect of the Soviet legacy for the SAO is the shortage of staff organizations and experienced staff officers with which to work. Many Kazakh officers who were working in other parts of the Soviet Union after its collapse eventually returned to Kazakhstan to serve in the military, but this was not sufficient to staff a new army. Officers often have to be assigned outside their area of expertise and young lieutenants sometimes work in staff positions that typically require officers with much more experience. In addition, during the Soviet Union there was no need to determine how to work with foreign military forces. For many Soviet trained officers, particularly in a country with strong military ties to Russia, there is still a degree of hesitation about working with Western officers, probably justified by the fact that counterintelligence services are actively watching. Over the past 18 months, the Soviet ice has been melting, but old habits such as secrecy and distrust of outsiders demands time and work to earn trust and cooperation.

Immediately after independence, the financial crisis, including 2000 percent inflation, and the monumental task of organizing a new government, prevented Kazakhstan from putting significant resources into defense. In the late 1990's as more funding became available, deployment of forces to the Southern region bordering Kyrgystan and Uzbekistan became a top priority. To the South, the Taliban were slowly consolidating control over Afghanistan and seemed intent to continue spreading their radical view of Islam to Central Asia. In 1999, the Taliban-supported Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan began terrorist and guerrilla operations in Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan, and in 2000 began operating in the Kazakh-Uzbek border region.

Development of ground and naval forces infrastructure in the Caspian Region began in earnest only in 2002. Concern about the Western Border Region has grown along with the growth of the oil industry in the region, but concern turned to alarm in July 1991 when Iran, which was aggressively disputing the Caspian delimitation plans of the former Soviet states, sent a gun boat into Azeri waters to chase off a British oil exploration vessel. The attacks on September 11, 2001, increased Kazakhstan's sense of the vulnerability of its strategically important oil production facilities and the nuclear power plant in Aktau on the Caspian Sea.

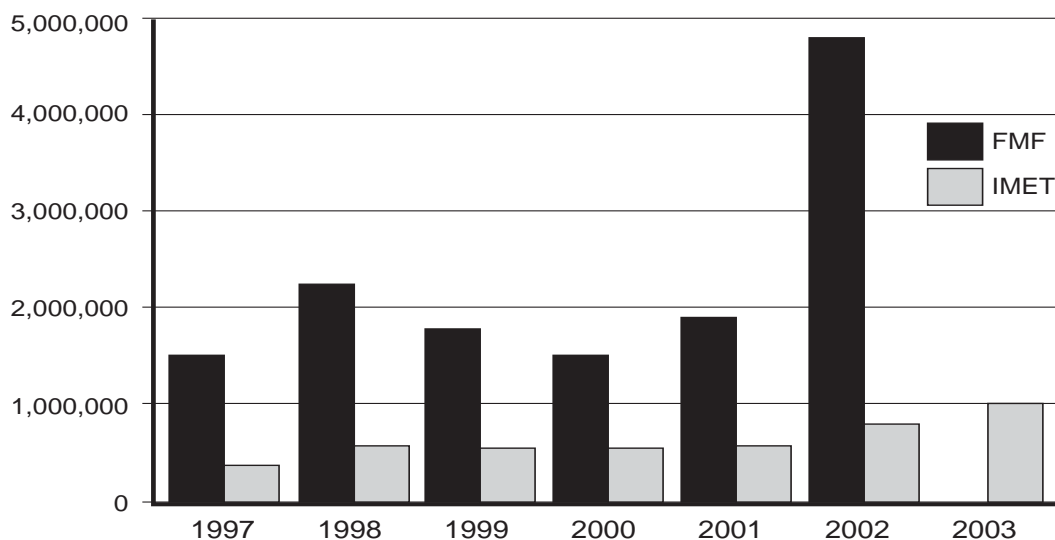
SAO Operations and Challenges

Kazakhstan inherited four organizations with military troops: the traditional Ministry of Defense organizations - the Army and Air Force; the military forces of the Committee for National Security (formerly KGB) which include border forces and special operations; Ministry of Interior (national police) military units; and agency for emergency situation troops. Of these organizations, the SAO has worked almost exclusively with MoD. In late 2002, we began an initiative to work with the Border Forces Maritime Department (fulfilling missions similar to the U.S. Coast Guard) on Caspian Sea security issues. There is much potential for working with the Agency for Emergency Situations to design humanitarian assistance programs related to earthquake preparedness and disaster response on the Caspian Sea but nothing has been planned to date.

Kazakhstan began receiving FMF and international military education and training (IMET) funding in 1997, the defense attaché's office, and a series of temporary duty officers ran SAO activities until I arrived as the first permanent SAO in May 2001. With attachés rotating annually, and no officer to run security assistance functions, it was difficult for both the embassy and the Ministry of Defense to formalize a security assistance program or to maintain continuity with MoD during the long process of developing an FMS case. The result was that by December 2000, of the \$7,000,000 Kazakhstan had received in FMF, MoD had in-hand two open FMS cases from 1997 and 1999 and \$29,000 in flight suits. That month, with a pressing need to deploy troops south and west, and frustration over its inability to get any equipment, MoD cancelled its outstanding letter of offer and requests (LORs), and requested to use all available funding to build a military base. In addition, in 2001 the Minister cancelled most bilateral exercises pending the outcome of the construction request.

Being a security assistance officer I understand the MoD's frustration with the FMS process. However, a more significant concern results from a lack understanding of the FMS process and MoD's lack of specific force development plans. It is up to the DISAM-trained security assistance officers to work the FMS system, to assist the MoD in understanding how the FMS monies are utilized. Soviet staff methodology also made it difficult for the embassy staff to work with MoD. MoD handled security assistance as it had relations with defense attachés, that is, basically as a protocol matter under the External Relations Department (UVS in Russian) tightly controlled by counterintelligence.

The chart below represents dollar amounts of Foreign Military Finance and International Military Education and Training funds Kazakhstan has been receiving since 1997.



The protocol officers assigned to monitor contacts with the U.S. embassy were in the apparatus, the minister's staff, which reported directly to the minister. As it turned out, the staff officers of the External Relations Department acted only as middlemen to pass the information through the Chief of Staff, which controls all operational units and also reports directly to the minister. The External Relations Department demanded all inquiries from the SAO in writing. It would then pass or rewrite it as a directive through the Chief of Staff to the organization involved with the case. The unit would provide a written response that the External Relations Department would then rewrite and send to the SAO. Throw in the fact that that this process involved at least two translations and was managed by MoD officers that had little exposure to U.S. equipment, and the result was confusing and time consuming.

MoD has broad force development objectives: build a modern, highly mobile professional army, including a professional non-commissioned officer (corps, a mobile/rapid response force, a new strategic air defense system, a peacekeeping unit and a navy. However, MoD does not have the trained staff required to take the planning down to the level of detail required to fully integrate FMF into their development plans. Although there are broad plans, and individual MoD organizations understand their needs, the difficult part for the SAO is that no organization existed that could work with the SAO to analyze and prioritize these needs at the highest level then plan out for several years based on projected funding. Most of the staff was struggling at the tactical level just trying to keep their units going and meet their operation and training needs. As a consequence, LORs over the years have been all over the map; from flight suits to movie cameras, nuclear biological and chemical suits and Ford truck.. Most were canceled or changed multiple times as the influence of various staff officers and ideas shifted.

The international military education and training program was also a challenge. Few in MoD understood the IMET program or its potential benefits. The IMET was also managed by the External Relations Department. Despite the fact that some very competent officers worked the process, the MoD bureaucracy worked against them. There are many things working against the program. First, there was the onerous task of writing diplomatic notes or formal letters between the Embassy and MoD for each and every change or modification to a course. The time required to do this often resulted in last minute crises with late documents or cancellations.

Then there was the personnel system itself. Officer education and assignments are not centrally managed. There is no database to find a qualified officer for a particular course. External Relations Department would send a letter to the personnel department requesting a candidate only after the school date was announced. The personnel department then sent letters to the military district commanders and other organizations to request candidates. An officer could not be sent to school unless he was already assigned to a position. Commanders were naturally reluctant to give up their best officers for training that could last up to a year while maintaining a vacant position. Also, candidates that would most benefit the military by attending school typically could not speak English. This meant potentially months of additional in-country language preparation prior to attending a CONUS school. Since Kazakhstan had an ECL waiver, this encouraged a high level of what in the U.S. would be considered unethical behavior. Without the need to meet a standard, and the fact that the personnel system worked against finding the best qualified candidates, often officers were selected simply because they had connections to someone in the inner circle who had control over the program. Over the years many, officers went to IMET courses more than once and these same officers also attended partnership for peace (PfP) and other North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) partner training courses. The desire to travel overseas was understandable but it did not meet either U.S. or MoD objectives.

Building a Partnership

The view shared by General Franks and the MoD was that engagement activities were random and nothing concrete was being achieved. Engagement needed to become focused. The Kazakhstanis wanted to gain results from their mil-to-mil relationship with the U.S., but did not know how to achieve it. To get results we needed two things; a new organization in MoD to handle security assistance issues and a comprehensive security assistance plan tied into mil-to-mil engagement.

The only solution was to convince MoD to change its way of doing business and help MoD get a handle on IMET and FMF. The first big challenge was to convince MoD that the SAO and the U.S. military should be viewed as a partner furthering Kazakhstan's defense goals instead of a representative of the former enemy with lots of money. I approached this by establishing planning meetings directly with commanders and staff associated with the LOR for the construction project and a canceled LOR for operational clothing for the peacekeeping unit. It was difficult at first to convince the External Relations Department leadership that meetings were even necessary. It often took weeks or months to set up one meeting! By making progress on the construction and actually delivering some equipment to the peacekeeping battalion in December 2001, thank you for moving so fast U.S. Army Security Assistance Command (USASAC), I began to win some converts. The big break came, however, in January 2002 when the new minister and new Chief of International Programs came on board.

Reforming IMET and getting the fiscal year 2003 IMET plan done was the most pressing issue. In January, I presented MoD with a paper entitled "Using Foreign Sponsored Training to Develop a Professional Military Force in Kazakhstan" proposing the formation of a new MoD organization to coordinate foreign government sponsored training, and the creation of an officer professional management system to manage the trained officers. The paper focused on how foreign sponsored training such as IMET would further the Minister's goal of creating a modern, professional army if it were managed properly. Initial focus should be training for MoD high priority units such as the Kazakhstan Peacekeeping Battalion, and the Mobile Forces, that may work or train with NATO or United Nations forces in the future. The idea is that once a system could be worked out to support one unit, it could grow to encompass all of MoD.

When the proposal was positively received, I began campaigning to simultaneously create a staff office to manage Foreign Military Sales. Getting officers DISAM trained and spreading

general knowledge about FMF and FMS as widely as possible in MoD was critical. We proposed a DISAM MET with an executive session for senior MoD officials, and CONUS training for the staff. In April, MoD gave full support to the proposal and announced the formation of a new International Cooperation Center with full authorization to work in direct partnership with the SAO. Responsibility for contact with foreign attachés however, was not formally transferred and remained under protocol's control. After the DISAM seminar in August, and more discussion on what the new organization's mandate would be, MoD decided to consolidate all foreign training and equipment programs, including PfP, under one office and subordinated protocol functions to training and equipment management. This was a key decision that will allow more direct liaison with attachés who coordinate education and training programs. Formal restructuring and a full operational budget will be granted beginning after the new fiscal year in January 2003 and, with some luck, program management will get easier.

Security Assistance Planning

With increased cooperation, and consensus on the direction to take United States-Kazakhstan military relations, we had grounds to begin creating a formal five-year Security Assistance Plan that is intended to lead to a visible increase in MoD defensive capabilities, as well as closer military cooperation with the United States. The idea is to focus on specific objectives to get the maximum impact from FMF, IMET, enhanced international peacekeeping capabilities (EIPC), mil-mil engagement activities, and, to the greatest extent possible, integrate the resources of other U.S. government agencies with overlapping interests such as Export Control Border Security, Cooperative Threat Reduction, and INL. The second step, once MoD formally approves the five year security assistance plan (expected in January-February 2003) is to begin working with MoD to integrate support from other NATO countries with bilateral programs such as Turkey and Great Britain, as well as Partnership for Peace activities.

The security assistance concept follows:

- Integrate and focus all available assets (FMF, IMET, PfP, bilateral engagement) in a targeted force development effort that meets both U.S. and Kazakhstan strategic objectives. Support for systemic reform will be focused on those reforms required to meet the force development objectives.

Using a combination of the U.S. interests outlined in the *National Security Strategy*, *National Military Strategy*, and Kazakhstan's security situation we found overlapping interests:

- U.S.: Stable Caspian Sea region; reliable, interoperable military partner; secure borders to prevent proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.
- Kazakhstan: Professional military, international peacekeeping capability, mobile force capable of national deployment, deterrence and defense capability; in southern and western Caspian border regions.

From these interests we drafted the following long-term security assistance goals:

Force Development:

- Develop a North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) interoperable peacekeeping force
- Develop Caspian Sea region ground, maritime, and air defense force
- Develop rapid reaction/SOF forces peacekeeping force
- Develop Caspian Sea region ground, maritime, and air defense force
- Develop rapid reaction/SOF forces

Systemic Reform:

- Officer/non-commissioned officer (NCO) personnel management
- Professional non-commissioned officer corps
- Vehicle and Equipment Maintenance System
- English language training system

The force development goals provide the direction to develop projects that can be supported by multiple programs. The systemic reform goals are necessary to achieve and sustain long-term success of the force development projects. New military capabilities and interoperability require not only new equipment and training, but also new management systems to sustain these capabilities for the long-term. This is a step beyond the total package approach, but here it is absolutely necessary. New equipment can be easily purchased with spares and a training package, but if the personnel system is not capable of sustaining the unit over the long term with trained personnel to operate and maintain the equipment, and personnel who understand the doctrine required to fulfill the unit's intended missions, no long-term improvement will be achieved.

Security Assistance Office Goals**Objectives**

Integrate security assistance programs into a coherent plan for developing Kazaakhstani military and security capabilities that correspond to U.S. national security interests. Prime focus is to develop security capabilities in the Caspian region and deployable peacekeeping unit.

Use security assistance programs to form a basis for future defense cooperation and military sales. Introduce the government of Kazakhstan to U.S. military equipment and defense manufacturers.

Major Ongoing Activities**Foreign Military Financing**

HMMWVs for Peacekeeping Battalion and counterterrorist teams
Reconstruction of military base - Atyrau (Caspian Sea)

Foreign Military Sales Case Development/Facilitating U.S. Defense Industry Access

Strategic air defense system - Lockheed Martin
Helicopter acquisition: Bell - Textron, MD Helicopters
MoD and border forces tactical communications: Multiple companies

International Military Education Training

Expanded international military education and training program to support maritime law reform
Reform in-country English language training in cooperation with British Council.

Other

Development and planning of Caspian security initiative

For example, the concept to “develop a NATO interoperable peacekeeping force” is to equip and train a battalion size peacekeeping unit. The end state is a NATO interoperable peacekeeping unit capable of deploying and sustaining itself in support of a United Nations led military operation. Foreign military finance (FMF) is funding major new equipment purchases for the peacekeeping unit, including HMMWVs. However, sustaining this unit for the long-term requires systemic reforms which will further the minister's force development goal for creating a professional army. For example, the peacekeeping unit will require a complete change in the way officers and NCOs are managed. The unit will require officers who understand peacekeeping

doctrine and a certain number that speak English. It also requires officers who can manage the operation and maintenance of the new U.S. equipment, such as HMMWVs and radios, which the unit will have. In the current personnel system there are no set rotation cycles for officers or NCOs. It is impossible to train replacements without a predetermined rotation schedule. Training and career management will need to be managed centrally based on the demands of the unit. MoD is already well on its way to creating a professional NCO, however, MoD must change the culture of the army to accept NCOs as leaders and junior managers. The peacekeeping battalion will be the first unit to receive a concentrated number of U.S. trained NCOs and officers to serve together. Last year the SAO initiated discussions to take send newly graduated lieutenants directly to Officer Basic Courses. The idea is to place these young officers with NCOs that have attended primary leadership development course (PLDC) or basic non-commissioned officer course in the United States.

Developing a Partnership to Secure the Caspian Sea

Given the explosive growth of oil infrastructure in Kazakhstan's Caspian Sea Region, the need to develop a comprehensive security system is becoming evident. There are those who are concerned that the sea is already becoming militarized and this in itself is a danger to regional stability. However, Iran and Russia already have significant maritime forces, including naval infantry. Caspian security cannot be based on the hope that the neighborhood will continue to be politically stable or the neighbors benevolent. Terrorists have proven that they can strike in distant locations against soft targets. Given that the largest concentration of U.S. commercial investment in the former Soviet Union is in oil production facilities in western Kazakhstan, Kazakhstan's ability to deter or respond to a terrorist attack should be an issue of U.S. concern. Also, the Caspian Sea presents a significant challenge to U.S. efforts to control the spread of weapons of mass destruction since it is a direct and lightly monitored transport route to Iran and the Caucasus.

The first attempt to form a comprehensive concept to improve Caspian security was in the fiscal years 2004-2009 security assistance budget submission in June 2001 which included a multi-year request to develop a Caspian Region rapid reaction capability and a maritime training center. Based on discussions with the Coast Guard International Training Department, we also began planning for a Coast Guard survey to review the overall maritime security situation to better understand what our priorities should be.

As mentioned earlier, in 2001 MoD's top priority for FMF and, U.S. engagement in general, was the construction of new military bases. In October, a joint MoD, SAO and U.S. Corps of Engineers survey team chose an unused building complex in Atyrau, near the Caspian Sea, from among several potential projects from various regions of Kazakhstan as the most suitable from both engineering and policy perspectives. SAO and MoD agreed to organize the project jointly, using U.S. funding to refurbish the headquarters buildings and barracks and MoD funding to design the entire project and build annex buildings. At that time, U.S. policy support for using FMF to do construction was unclear, so it was important to connect the project proposal to U.S. security concerns. Building the first permanent military base in Kazakhstan's Caspian Region as a U.S.-Kazakhstani joint project was both highly symbolic and a good fit with the general policy objectives of both countries.

The Atyrau project, as it came to be called, forms the basis for current and future security assistance planning for the development of ground forces capabilities in the Caspian Region. Ideally, it will also become the first location for joint U.S. and Kazakhstani military training exercises in the Caspian Region. Pending formal acceptance of the new five-year plan, future FMF will be used to transform the unit at this base into a light/rapid reaction force equipped with HMMWVs, which are more appropriate for the terrain than armored vehicles, as well as NATO interoperable communications.



The Port of Bautino, north of Aktau, will become busy once more supporting offshore oil development. However, the current conditions reflect the economic collapse of the Soviet maritime system on the Caspian.

Planning support for the development of maritime security was more complex. In 2001, MoD again began focusing on the creation of a Navy, because in the mid-1990s MoD Navy Commander, Rear Admiral Komratov, now Commander of the Western Military District that encompasses the Caspian Region, established a small maritime force from old Soviet vessels, and some excess boats provided by Germany and by the U.S. under cooperative threat reduction. In 1999 however, all MoD boats and some staff were turned over to the border forces. At that time, traditional Navy missions were not as pressing as the need to control the maritime border, which by law was a border forces mission.

The first MoD initiative for security assistance funding was to request equipment to form an interagency maritime training center in Aktau on what had been the campus for a technical institute. The establishment of the Military Maritime Institute (MMI) is actually part of a larger government project under the Ministry of Transportation and Communications to create a merchant marine and ship maintenance system so that Kazakhstan can eventually man and maintain both its commercial and military ships. The fact that MoD and the border forces would both train at the institute created grounds for close cooperation between the security assistance office and the embassy's export control border security representative who worked primarily with border forces and customs.

In early 2002, MoD developed an ambitious long-term plan for the development of the Western Military District that includes the creation and deployment of new ground, naval, and air defense forces. The border forces also began putting resources into development of their maritime capabilities including purchasing new riverine craft manufactured in Uralsk on the Ural River, to patrol the marshy north Caspian Coast. Based on MoD and border forces plans, the Embassy began a multi-agency effort to coordinate support to improve Kazakhstan's Caspian maritime capabilities. This effort, unofficially known as the Caspian Security Initiative, is an attempt to develop a plan based on the results of the Coast Guard surveys and focus funding sources

controlled by security assistance office, defense attaché office, export control and related border security assistance, international narcotics and law enforcement, and if possible, cooperative threat reduction to support the development of a maritime force. The first event associated with the Caspian Security Initiative was a visit in January by a Defense Institute International Legal Studies (DIILS) team to offer the government of Kazakhstan support in revising its maritime legal system to better support law enforcement and defense activities at sea.



In 2002, the Kazakhstan border forces bought new boats to patrol the delta regions in the north Caspian Sea. The young crews are apprehensive about a future which may include armed conflict with caviar poachers.

The Future

This is an exciting time to be a security assistance officer in not only Kazakhstan, but anywhere in Central Asia. Security assistance activities have the potential to plant the seeds for significant changes in these countries in the coming years. For the officers of the former Soviet Union, IMET offers an eye opening education on what freedom, democracy, peace and stability have created in the United States. With some luck and steady leadership, Kazakhstan has the opportunity to become a wealthy and stable democracy. By lending a helping hand now, at the earliest stages of building this new nation, the United States has the opportunity to not only build a potentially significant regional defense partner, but to bring peace and prosperity to a nation that has suffered much through its history.

About the Author

Lieutenant Colonel William (Bill) Lahue, is the chief of the U.S. Security Assistance to the Republic of Kazakhstan. He is a U.S. Army Foreign Area Officer, specializing in the former Soviet Union. In 1984 he was assigned as an infantry officer in the 8th Infantry Division, Baumholder, Germany, and has had command and staff assignments in Japan, the 2nd Infantry Division, Republic of Korea, and foreign area officer assignments as the U.S. Military Representative in Tajikistan, JCS/J2, and Office of Security Defense Russia Eurasia Branch. He has been a guest speaker on Central Asia military and security issues at the National Defense

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